



1703 N. Beauregard St., Suite 420, Alexandria, VA 22311 • Tel: (202) 467-5081 • Fax: (703) 465-5085

American Council of the Blind

ACB Survey Finds Need for Increased Audio Description

Contact: Anthony Stephens
astephens@acb.org

WASHINGTON (October 24, 2016) -- The American Council of the Blind (ACB) identifies major demand for the increase in available audio-described programming carried through television broadcast, satellite, and cable programming. The findings come after ACB held a national survey on described audio content that had more than 479 respondents.

The study painted an interesting portrait of the use of audio description for television, with responses coming from Americans who were blind, visually impaired, or had other relationships to Americans with vision loss. Findings indicated that three out of four respondents felt the current amount of available audio-described content was significantly below demand, and other obstacles still exist for accessing currently available content.

At A Glance:

- 91% of respondents reported listening to audio description in the past, with 69.7% blind, 21.1% visually impaired, and 8.2% sighted.
- 75.3% of respondents strongly agree that a greater amount of audio-described programming is needed.
- Almost half (45%) have difficulty in finding programs with audio description.
- More than half (53%) of respondents were over the age of 50, with one-third between the ages of 50-64.
- Breakdown of data showed overwhelming majority of use, regardless of the degree of vision loss, with nine out of ten being blind and eight out of ten partially sighted.
- More than three-quarters of respondents who were sighted reported using audio description in the household, noting among the reasons being other disabilities or roommates who were blind as a factor.
- One respondent who reported having no visual impairment but was autistic said that audio description is used in conjunction with closed captioning, in order to better assist with following the content.

Key Take-Aways:

Described audio programming is not just for individuals who are totally blind, but significantly used within the low-vision/partially sighted community. With this in mind, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports through their Vision Health Initiative (VHI) that the current number of legally blind Americans is 3.4M, while over 21M have visual impairment even with

corrective lenses, and an estimated 80M have potentially blinding diseases like diabetes. The CDC reports that this number will likely double by 2030.¹

Past studies have shown that over 75% of individuals who are blind or have significant vision loss live in a household with more than one individual.² Understanding this, ACB recognizes that a significant share of American households will significantly be impacted, requiring greater steps be taken to make homes more universally accessible. Television provides a window into the outside world, and while the CDC's VHI acknowledges that increased morbidity, depression, and other factors that prevent social inclusion are greater for individuals with severe vision loss, ACB encourages any action that can be taken to improve the quality of life through universal access in a manner that creates equal participation and inclusion in American society.

ACB asserts that the demand for audio description will continue to rise for the next two decades. Furthermore, the need will be greatest within households having residents 50 years or older. According to industry data from 2015, this demographic is the most loyal to the cable industry, with 83% of Americans over age 50 subscribing to cable, compared to only 65% for younger adults who are leaving cable for alternative viewing experiences.³ The more audio-described programming that is able to be televised via broadcast, satellite, and cable, then the greater the benefit for an increasingly growing segment of Americans.

###

¹ Centers for Disease Control's Vision Health Initiative. Accessed October 24th, 2016 at http://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/basic_information/vision_loss.htm

² Zuckerman, Diana M. (2004) "Blind Adults in America, Their Lives and Challenges." National Center on Research for Women and Families. Accessed October 21st, 2016 online at <http://center4research.org/medical-care-for-adults/disabilities/blind-adults-in-america-their-lives-and-challenges/>

³ Horrigan, John; Duggan, Maeve. Dec. 21, 2015). Home Broadband 2015: One-in-Seven Americans Are Television "Chord Cutters." Washington, DC. Pew Research Center. Accessed October 21st at <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/12/21/4-one-in-seven-americans-are-television-cord-cutters/>